Most recent migrants arrive with formal qualifications

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Source: Characteristics of recent migrants, November 2019

More than two thirds (69 per cent) of recent migrants aged 15 years and over held a formal, non-school qualification before they arrived in Australia, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The 2019 Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey showed that migrants arriving in the last 10 years with a qualification, the majority (79 per cent) held a Bachelor degree or higher, with another 13 per cent holding an Advanced Diploma or Diploma level qualification.

The most common field of study for recent migrant's highest pre-migration qualification was management and commerce (25 per cent), followed by engineering and related technologies (19 per cent), health (12 per cent) and information technology (12 per cent).

ABS Director of Migration and Small Population Insights, Jenny Dobak, said around 40 per cent of the migrants who held qualifications before arrival had applied to have these recognised by an Australian association or government agency in order to work in a particular job.

“In 90 per cent of these cases, pre-migration qualifications were fully recognised,” Ms Dobak said.

"As well, many recent migrants study after their arrival in Australia; more than a third (35 per cent) obtained a non-school qualification and around half (48 per cent) obtained a Bachelor Degree or higher."

The Survey also showed that of those recent migrants who have had a job since arriving in Australia, over half (54 per cent) had used their highest non-school qualification in their first job.

Further details are available in Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, Nov 2019 (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6250.0) (cat. no. 6250.0) available for free download from the ABS website https://www.abs.gov.au (https://www.abs.gov.au) .

The survey collected information in November 2019 before restrictions associated with COVID-19 were imposed.

Media notes

- Recent migrants are defined as people who were born overseas, first arrived to live in Australia (for one year or more) after 2009, were aged 15 years or over on arrival, were not New Zealand citizens, or Australian or New Zealand citizens on arrival, and have permanent Australian resident status.
- Temporary residents differ from Recent migrants in that they have a temporary visa, not a permanent visa.
- Non-school qualifications are awarded for educational attainments other than those of pre-primary, primary or secondary education. They include qualifications such as Postgraduate and Bachelor degrees, Diplomas and Certificates.
- When reporting ABS data, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) must be attributed as the source.
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